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## Albania

### Poultry and Products

## First Albanian Case of Avian Influenza Found in Domestic Poultry

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**Report Highlights:**

On March 8, the Albanian government confirmed the presence of Avian Influenza (AI) H5N1 strain in domestic poultry in southern Albania. Unlike the case in other European countries where AI virus was first discovered in wild birds, the first Albanian AI case was found in domestic chickens. Measures to prevent spreading of the virus have been taken by the Albanian government including setting up a 3 km quarantine zone and culling chickens in the affected area. It has been reported that poultry consumption in Albania has already dropped 40 percent.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
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On March 8, the Albanian Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection (MAFCP) confirmed in a press conference the presence of Avian Influenza (AI) in domestic chickens in southern Albania. Unlike the case in other European countries, where AI virus first discovered in wild birds, the first Albanian AI case was found in domestic poultry. In February, the discovery of dead chicken grown in backyard farms in Cuka and Peza, in the district of Saranda, raised suspicions of local veterinarians about possible Avian Influenza infection. Samples from the dead chickens were collected during February 16-20 and sent to the Veterinary Research Institute (VRI) in Tirana, where initial testing was done and samples tested positive for H5. The VRI laboratory sent samples to the OIE reference laboratory in Weybridge, England. The results of the analysis confirmed the presence of AI strain H5N1.

The Ministry of Agriculture's Veterinary service, the VRI and the Public Health Institute have started to implement measures to deal with the situation and prevent spreading of the virus. The measures included setting up a quarantine zone within 3 kilometers radius while putting the area within 10 km from the location where the infected birds were found under a close watch. The affected area has been strictly monitored for both animal and human suspected cases. Blood samples have been taken from people in the affected area and so far all tests have been negative for AI. About 2000 birds have been culled and the Agricultural Ministry announced that a compensation scheme would be implemented. The scheme sets compensation payments of 400-700 leks for each chicken (depending on size) 1,500 leks for the goose and 2,500 for the turkey. (1 US\$ = 100 leks).

International donors, including the World Bank and USAID, have developed a support plan to help the Albanian government respond effectively to the bird flu crisis. Each donor has a specific area of emphasis. These include outreach programs to farmers, strengthening surveillance, compensation to farmers and assisting medical facilities. The plan is moving forward but final approval by the government and donor mission directors is still pending. In the meantime, UNICEF printed pamphlets in Albanian on how to avoid the risk of avian influenza. These pamphlets will be distributed in rural areas to inform farmers about Avian Influenza.

Local poultry production in Albania is reported to be about 6,275,000 birds annually, half of which produced on commercial farms. Total poultry meat import is estimated at about 25,000 MT annually, with the U.S. controlling about 50 percent market share (mostly chicken parts). Brazil, Argentina and Turkey control about 40 percent of the import market, while EU countries (France, Italy and Hungary) control the remaining 10 percent. Albanian poultry industry sources report that poultry consumption has dropped 40 percent and they fear that consumption may decline further. Small poultry producers are expected to suffer more than large commercial farms from the consumption decline. The U.S. Poultry and Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) is planning a PR campaign targeted at Albanian consumers to stem the negative impact of AI on poultry consumption.